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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1026
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 5030
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 0452
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 0286
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1018
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 0554
RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA PRIORITY 2144
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0157

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 002596

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EUR FOR PDAS VOLKER
WHA FOR PDAS SHAPIRO
EUR/WE FOR ALLEGRONE, CLEMENTS, AND CERVETTI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/12/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CU](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN/CUBA: SPAIN DOES NOT WANT LEAD ON JOINT
US-EU STATEMENT ON CUBA TRANSITION

REF: A. MADRID 2583

[1](#)B. MADRID 2495

[1](#)C. HELSINKI 1032

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens; reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) MFA Secretary of State for Ibero America Trinidad Jimenez told the Ambassador October 11 that she wanted to preserve her channels of communication with Cuban authorities and therefore did not want Spain to take the lead at this time in developing a US-EU joint statement on Cuba. The Ambassador pointed out that this was a substantially different position than that agreed to by MFA Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Bernardino Leon in the high level bilateral meetings on Latin America on the margins of the UNGA. Jimenez clarified that Spain understood the utility of a joint US-EU statement and would not impede efforts by another EU member to develop such a document. She said that Spain had investigated this possibility with the Italian MFA Director General for Latin America, whom she described as leftist but a stalwart on Cuba human rights issues, to gauge his interest. Also on Cuba, Jimenez told the Ambassador that Spanish businessmen in Cuba reported clear signs of change in their working environment, generally in a positive direction. She did not elaborate with details of precisely what these changes consist of.

//COMMENT//

[1](#)2. (C) These comments, together with comments by Spanish officials in meetings with Cuba Transition Coordinator Caleb McCarry and Venezuela Coordinator Deborah McCarthy (Refs A and B), provide confirmation that Spain is not prepared at this time to take the lead within the EU in issuing a strong statement in support of a rapid democratic transition in Cuba. On the contrary, Spanish officials seem more comfortable with the concept of a gradual transition, and want to maintain their lines of communication with Raul Castro and other regime insiders. Leon is willing to contemplate another approach, but Jimenez is evidently establishing her leadership on all Latin America issues (contrary to what Leon and FM Miguel Angel Moratinos may have anticipated). Jimenez's low-profile approach is disappointing, but her statement that Spain would not block an EU statement on Cuba does provide an opening to approach other allies to urge that they take the lead on this issue.

Italy is one possibility, as indicated by Jimenez, but in Ref B former President Aznar indicated to Caleb McCarry that German officials may also be willing to move forward on Cuba.

It may be helpful to urge several countries to move ahead, if only to goad the Spanish into taking a more active role in order to avoid relinquishing leadership on Cuba within the EU. We will continue to work the matter here, and seek to educate Spanish officials on the opportunity for a smooth democratic transition that will benefit the Cuban people, and by extension U.S. and Spanish objectives in the region.

AGUIRRE